



My Child has Permanent Hearing Loss: Now what?

It can be overwhelming!

You recently found out something about your child that you probably never thought you would face. Most people have never really thought about children with hearing loss – until they have a child who is diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing.

Feelings

At first, many parents who have typical hearing themselves do not want to believe that THEIR child could have a hearing loss. It is natural to question if the testing was done correctly and if the diagnosis is wrong. Hearing testing IS very accurate even with children who are only a few weeks old. If you do feel the need to get another test, try to get it done as quickly as possible. Most likely the results will be the same.

Second, most parents feel overwhelmed by all of their questions and emotions right after they learn that their child has a hearing loss. It doesn't matter if your child is deaf, has a mild hearing loss, or has a hearing loss in just one ear – the fact that your child has any permanent hearing loss is probably a big shock to you. You may feel guilt, anger, confusion or that you just want it to all go away. All of these emotions come from suddenly having to face a situation that is probably new or challenging to you. These are normal reactions. In the midst of this whirlwind of feelings most parents find a way to focus on the question: What do I need to do to help my child?

Finding help for you

You are not alone! Nineteen out of 20 children with hearing loss are born to families with two parents with normal hearing. Of all of the different problems that babies can be born with, hearing loss is the most common! Many parents have gone through just what you are going through right now. In Minnesota, people who work to identify children's hearing loss know how important it is for parents of newly diagnosed children to connect with other parents who have gone through all of the same worry and questioning. [Minnesota Hands and Voices](#) provides information and support to families of children with hearing loss. It costs families nothing and the emotional support and front-line experience you can receive is priceless. Before you can help your child, you need to be able deal with your emotions enough to face the next steps. The people at Minnesota Hands and Voices may be strangers to you, but as parents of children with hearing loss, you have a shared experience that may help you face the situation and find the help that your child and family need.

Finding help for your child

Your child's audiologist can help you to understand how much hearing loss he or she has and to explore hearing aids. [Help Me Grow Infant and Toddler Intervention services](#) and Preschool Special Education services are available to support families and children with special health or learning needs from birth through preschool years. It is likely that your child will qualify for Help Me Grow services because hearing loss causes any child to be at high risk for slower language and speech development. Early

intervention service providers can help you to help your child's speech and language to develop at the same rate as children with typical hearing. If your child is already in school, ask your child's teacher or school principal about support services that can be provided to your in school.

Can't I just wait? It just seems so difficult right now!

The brains of young children develop as they hear, see and experience the world around them. Neural pathways actually grow because of this input. If one sense is limited, the brain's early development will be affected. Spoken language is developed naturally by overhearing people talk. Any amount of hearing loss will cause your child to have a smaller 'listening bubble' so that they experience less language. It is amazing how much early language learning occurs before a child ever says his or her first word! The critical timing for you to get help is no later than 6 months of age, but it is best if help is started as soon as possible. If your child has developed a hearing loss after infancy it will cause him or her to be at-risk for learning delays in school. It is hard to keep up in the classroom if you cannot hear what everyone else hears! The parents at Minnesota Hands and Voices can help you to work through periods when you are having difficulty dealing with the fact that your child has a hearing loss – they've been in your shoes! Your child's school system, either Help Me Grow Infant and Toddler services or learning specialists in your child's school will help you understand the steps to take and provide the information and help you need to take those steps.

The good news

Because of our ability to find hearing loss early, and with the advances in technology, the future of children with hearing loss has never had such a potential for success. As the first and most important teacher(s), your child will need you to help him or her find out the most successful way to communicate as an avenue for learning. As for the special knowledge you will need, you have people at your school district, your child's audiologist, Minnesota Hands and Voices, and many others who can help you on your journey to parent your child with hearing loss. Every journey begins with the first step!

Related information

[Minnesota Hands and Voices](#) - Parent Guides provide information and support to families of children with hearing loss at no cost.

[Hands & Voices](#) - is a nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families and their children who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as the professionals who serve them. We are a parent-driven, parent/professional collaborative group that is unbiased towards communication modes and methods. Our diverse membership includes those who are deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing impaired and their families who communicate orally, with signs, cue, and/or combined methods. We exist to help our children reach their highest potential.

[Hearing Families](#) – a website dedicated to supporting and strengthening families of children with hearing loss.

Developed by Karen L. Anderson, PhD for the Minnesota Department of Education Parents Know website, 2011 (<http://parentsknow.state.mn.us>).